

Thoughts from Richard

October 2014

I went to a presentation a few weeks ago at church. The title was "Did God really say that?"* Things God said about violence in the Old and New Testaments, and how to reconcile the differences.

I thought it would be a great night, since the guest speaker was a lecturer of the Old Testament from a local bible college, so I took two of my kids (ages 17 and 13). I expected them to learn about God's grace and also His judgement and how He revealed His desire for all to be saved through his people Israel.

I'm not sure if you could imagine my shock when this guy says that we CAN'T REALLY KNOW what God was ACTUALLY saying in the old testament...what? (This guy lectures on the Old Testament; he's been studying it for years!)

Someone asked about the flood, and did he think that God would do something like that? His answer was, "no, I can't really see Jesus doing something like that".

This dude had a BIG problem, and he knew it. He said we either need to RE-THINK our IDEA of God, or RE-THINK our IDEA of the Old Testament. His BIGGER THAN BIG problem was that if he said Jesus and God are not one, he would be a heretic - someone with an opinion profoundly at odds with the orthodox view. Orthodox means established and approved, generally and traditionally seen as right. The bible says that God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit are ONE God. (Jesus said, "[I and the Father are one.](#)" *Jn 10/30*. And, "[before Abraham was born, I AM](#)" *John 8/58,59*. The Jews saw this as claiming the same name as the Father, which is why they tried to kill him for blasphemy).

So our friend knew he couldn't try to change the nature of God (or he wouldn't be a Christian any more). He then admitted that we can't just ignore the Old Testament, since so much of the New Testament is quoting the old (about 20%). Jesus also quoted the Old Testament all the time, so to discard the Old Testament completely would be impossible.

So here's what the dude did. He said yes God is one, Jesus was there during the Old Testament. Good. He says we can't throw the Old Testament out. Good. He then said the most perplexing thing I've almost ever heard - he said that what we have to realise is if WE CAN'T UNDERSTAND why God said what He said in the Old Testament, then HE MUST HAVE MEANT SOMETHING DIFFERENT (to what He clearly said). The next thing he said was classic - "When God said one thing, He was trying to get us to understand something else". The 'something else' turns out to be what our guy WISHES God had said, instead of what He ACTUALLY said.

Can you see this guy's problem? Honestly, I wouldn't have written all this if it was only him. I went home and started to google some stuff, like Emergent Church. It's not just him. There's a whole movement out there who think that the bible is a big metaphorical story of stuff that only the really educated ones can understand, and they can't understand it either!

Their problem is they have an IDEA of God, instead of listening to the REVELATION of God (His Word). They make up a picture of what they would like God to be. If the bible says something different, well, it can't actually mean what it says. Thus the bible, in their view, is not clear.

I'd like to say to you that the bible is one of the most, if not the most clearly written book ever. 66 books, 40 or so authors, all coherently pointing to God's nature, His plan of salvation for fallen man, his revelation of Himself in Jesus, Jesus taking our sins upon Himself and offering us his righteousness so we can stand pure before our Lord and King.

God Himself says something quite different to our poor lecturer. The Creator of the universe say this about His word:

"All scripture is God breathed, and useful for teaching, rebuking, correction and training in righteousness, so that the man or woman of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work"
2 Tim 3/16

"As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in Him" Ps 18/30

*"The law of the Lord is **perfect, reviving the soul.**
The statutes of the Lord are **trustworthy, making wise the simple.**
The precepts of the Lord are **right, giving joy to the heart.**
The commands of the Lord are **radiant, giving light to the eyes.**
The fear of the Lord is **pure, enduring for ever.**
The ordinances of the Lord are **sure and altogether righteous.**
They are **more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey.**
By them is your servant warned; in keeping them is great reward" Ps 19 7-11*

The idea that the word of God is cloudy and unclear is shown up for the lie it is when we surround that statement with scripture.

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" Ps 119/105

God says, *"this is the one I ESTEEM, he who is humble and contrite in heart, who trembles at my Word"* Isa 66/2

Friends, let's not be tossed to and fro by the current trends, *"for the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever"* Isa 40/8

"I will praise your name for your love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your NAME and your WORD. When I called, you answered me; you made me bold and stout-hearted" Ps 138/2

Let's be bold and stout-hearted too, in the assurance that, *"the name of the Lord is a mighty tower the righteous run to it and are safe"* Prov 18/10

Your servant in Him
Richard

* "Did God really say that?" My wife pointed out that that's exactly what the snake Satan said to Eve in the garden. He's still saying it today!